

SC/007/10

Committee Standards Committee

Date 29 April 2010

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Draft Annual Report

**ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
AND ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
JOINT
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Annual Report
2009/10**

1. Roles and Functions

The Standards Committee has the following roles and functions:

- a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives
- b) assisting the councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct
- c) advising the Council on the adoption of revisions of the Members' Code of Conduct
- d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct
- e) advising, training or arranging to train councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct
- f) granting dispensations to councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct
- g) dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter which is referred by an ethical standards officer to the Monitoring Officer
- h) receiving and assessing complaints about Members in relation to the Code of Conduct
- i) as and when requested by complainants to review decisions to not refer a complaint for investigation following the assessment process referred to in paragraph h)
- j) conducting hearings of complaints about the behaviour of Members following an investigation
- k) acting as Standards Committee for the Essex Fire Authority for the purpose of its Statutory functions

2. Membership

2.1 The Standards Committee is made up of six elected County Councillors and five Independent Members appointed by the Full Council.

2.2 The current Independent Members are:

Martin Atkinson (Chairman) - Martin's career has been in Higher Education, and having recently retired, he is now Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of Essex.

Tony French (Vice-Chairman) - Tony held senior finance positions in Industry, and since his retirement has worked in the voluntary sector.

Michael Goodswen - Michael's experience in Banking includes Trade Union Negotiations. He is now an Independent Member of Essex Police Authority Standards Committee and The Eastern Region Police Misconduct Panel.

Daniel Farrow – Daniel is a qualified Chartered Management Accountant with several years experience in banking and commerce. Formerly Daniel was Chief Financial Officer of Maldex PLC and more recently was Chief Executive of the TIS Group.

Christopher Jackman - Chris has recently retired from a local government career working in London and Essex as a Housing Manager.

2.2.1 The position of Independent Member is open to anyone who can demonstrate that they have personal integrity, commitment to equal opportunities, the capacity to be fair and independent and the ability to take an objective view, analyse and solve complex problems and exercise sound judgement. Independent Members are recruited following advertisement in local newspapers and a selection process.

2.3 The elected members of the Standards Committee are

2.4 In addition the Chairman of the Council is an ex-officio member of the committee.

3. Work of the Committee

3.1 This year has been the first year that the Committee has acted as the joint committee for Essex County Council and the Fire authority.

3.2 During the course of the year, the Committee

- has participated in the training offered to new members after the elections of 2009.
- has dealt with the procedures necessary for the conduct of hearings. It has taken the opportunity to develop policies for the assessment of complaints and has built upon the experience of assessing complaints to do so.
- has continued to familiarise itself with the information provided by the Standards Board for England, including case studies that are presented as of particular interest
- has been represented at the annual conference of the Standards Board and has received reports from attendees
 - Has put in place the mechanism to replace existing independent members who will be retiring in the forthcoming year.
- assessed
- contributed to the programme of training for newly elected Members

4. Future work programme

4.1 The Committee is devising a forward plan of work in order to programme tasks for the forthcoming year. Some of the items to be included are:

- The Committee will continue to work as a joint committee and ensure that adjustments and fine tuning occurs as necessary
- Opportunities to promulgate and publicise guidance and case reports published by the Standards Board for England will be explored
- The Committee will include in its work the review of key documents that contribute to the ethical framework
- Further training concerning determination for any complaint that is referred for investigation

5. Conclusion

5.1